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## Toronto's Poet Laureate

Toronto's Poet Laureate serves as the City's literary ambassador. As an advocate for poetry, language and the arts, the Poet Laureate attends events across the city to promote and attract people to the literary world. The Poet Laureate's mandate also includes the creation of a legacy project that will be unique to the individual. The term of the Poet Laureate is three years.

The position of the Poet Laureate honours a Toronto poet whose work displays excellence and has written on themes that are of relevance to Torontonians.

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Pier Giorgio Di Cicco has authored 17 collections of poetry since 1976 and was a seminal figure in Canadian Multiculturalism with his edition of the first anthology of Italian-Canadian writers and through his collaborative work with the Multiculturalism Directorate, the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council. He was born in Arezzo , Italy , raised in Montreal , Baltimore and Toronto and did post-graduate work at the University of Toronto . In 1984 he removed himself from the world of letters and became an Augustinian Brother, and was subsequently ordained to the Roman Catholic Priesthood. He returned to the world of literature and education in 2000 with four successive volumes of verse, including "The Dark Time of Angels" which was nominated for the Trillium Award in 2004. In 2004 he was the Emilio Goggio Visiting Professor in Italian Studies at the University

of Toronto and appointed by the City of Toronto as its second Poet Laureate.

Di Cicco has extended the role of Poet Laureate beyond the area of arts advocacy and into the realm of "civic aesthetic", a term coined to define the building of a city by citizenship, civic ethic and urban psychology. His monographs and essays have pioneered a study of civility proactive to the design of a city and foundational to the vision of the "urban global". With his "creative manifesto" (delivered before an assembly of national and municipal arts planners and professionals in December 2004) he set a tone for urban self-imaging based on a creative ethic that permeates all sectors of city enterprise. He has championed the abolition of art as "destination point" and the notion of culture as civic ambience and engine of urban prosperity. This philosophy, disseminated electronically, through media and policy networks has found popularity in forums ranging from The Prime Minister's Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities, The Creative Cities Project of the Ontario and Toronto governments, to The Waterfront Revitalization Corporation and international conferences on urban sustainability. In 2005 he was appointed official "Curator" for the City of Toronto 's Humanitas project, a global showcase where Toronto will host its heritage, vision and strategy for global citizenship.

Di Cicco's urban philosophy has influenced municipal policy in Canada , the U.S. and United Kingdom and has moved the role of the poet laureate into the forum of global engagement in issues that address the urban aesthetic and its relationship to livable and sustainable cities.

Look for the release of his 18th book, The Visible World in the spring of 2006.

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### Poet Laureate's speeches and monographs



(All documents are in PDF - format)

### 2006

- Address at the celebration of Live with Culture/Toronto Life magazine "face the arts" recipients and Imagine: The Creative Cities Strategies Report (December).
- Remarks to the Champions of the EPCOR Centre for Performing Arts
- Remarks at the Creative Cities Network Conference (October)
- Address to Calgary City Council (October)
- Launch of World House Project of the Institute Without Boundaries – George Brown School of Design (August)
- Remarks on the presentation of the Creative Cities Strategies Report (July)
- Remarks at the 2006 Canadian Urban Institute Awards (June)
- Remarks at the Humanitas Festival launch (May)
- Remarks at the 2006 Business Excellence Awards (May)
- Address to the Mayor of Tampa (March)
- Monograph: Toronto 's Love Affair with Creativity
- Monograph: Creativity and the City
- Monograph: Creativity as Project
- Monograph: Notion of Welcome in Urban Design
- Monograph: Notion of Safety and Trust
- Monograph: Multiculturalism and the City
- Monograph: Welcome and Response – the creative ethic

## 2005

- Valedictory to the London and Toronto Delegations on the New York leg of the Creative Cities Project (October)
- Remarks at the official closing of the 10th Annual Metropolis Conference (October)
- Remarks at the official opening of the 10th Annual Metropolis Conference (October)
- Remarks at the official opening of the Alsop Design Limited Toronto Studio (October)
- Remarks at the closing of the Artspace/Risk Revolution Conference (October)
- Remarks at the Creative Places and Spaces/Risk Revolution Conference: Creativity vs. Invention and Innovation (October)
- Remarks at the opening of the Risk Revolution and the Creative City - The Artscape Conference (October)
- Remarks at the 2005 Innoversity Summit Conference (September)
- Remarks at the 2005 City of Toronto Book Awards (September)
- Monograph: Civic Valentines
- Monograph: The Language of Culture Discussion
- Monograph: The City and Diversity
- Monograph: Public Policy and Public Psychology
- Toronto Star article: Chasing Buzz (August 14)
- Remarks at the launch of the Year of Creativity celebrations (June)
- Remarks on the occasion of the opening of the City of Toronto's Doors Open Festival (May)
- Gala Speech for "Spacing" magazine (and "Murmur") fundraiser; part of the Festival and Architecture and Design Month (May)
- Opening Speech at the Architecture and Urban Design Awards (May)
- Monograph: Towards the Legacy of an Idea
- Monograph: The Dynamics of Creativity in the City
- Monograph: The Dynamics of Passion
- Monograph: Toronto is Self-Conscious
- Monograph: Notes of the Civic and the Solitary
- Monograph: The Private Self

## 2004

- Remarks on the acceptance of the Leonardo da Vinci Award in Education (November)
- Public address on the occasion of visiting Creative City expert Charles Landry (November)
- Inaugural speech of the Poet Laureate (September)



### The passing of the pen

Dennis Lee (left) and Pier Giorgio Di Cicco. Pier Giorgio was appointed Toronto's newest Poet Laureate in September 2004.



"I am honoured to have the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of my esteemed colleague and fellow poet Mr. Dennis Lee," says Pier Giorgio Di Cicco. "It will be with pride and passion that I carry forward the mandate of the Poet Laureate position for the City of Toronto and its residents."

### Toronto's First Poet Laureate: Dennis Lee 2001-2004



Dennis Lee is the author of numerous award-winning books of poetry for adults and children. Some of his most beloved titles include *Alligator Pie* (1974), *Garbage Delight* (1977) and *Jelly Belly* (1983).

During his three-year tenure as Toronto's Poet Laureate, Lee continued to bring sheer delight to kids and published two children's books, *Bubblegum Delicious* (2000), and *The Cat and the Wizard* (2001), in addition to a new volume of adult poetry, *Un* (2003). His latest poetry collection entitled *So Cool* features poems for early teen readers, was released in September 2004.

Lee created the Cultural Legacy Program as his legacy project. The program weaves the names of Toronto's artists and thinkers into the

fabric of the city by naming streets, squares, parks and other public places after well-known figures.

The Cultural Legacy Program will continue to be implemented over the coming years and will identify revered individuals associated with Toronto in appropriate venues. Lee will be assisted by The Friends of the Poet Laureate, a volunteer committee whose members share Lee's enthusiasm for the literary arts.

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### **A legacy in the making: Cultural Legacy Program**

The renaming of the Toronto-Dominion Courtyard to Oscar Peterson Place was the first site to be designated as part of Dennis Lee's Cultural Legacy Program. For many years, this square has become synonymous with excellent outdoor concerts and is the perfect location to commemorate Canadian jazz legend [Oscar Peterson](#).

A celebration was held to honour Mr. Peterson on June 22, 2004. Mayor David Miller also proclaimed the day as [Oscar Peterson Day in Toronto](#).



*Oscar Peterson reacts as Dennis Lee remarks, "this is probably the only time in his career that Oscar Peterson has been called a square."*



**Mayor Miller stated that "For six decades, Oscar Peterson has entertained the world with his mastery and passion for the piano and promoted the recognition of our multicultural heritage. He has been an asset to our city by being a musical ambassador."**



**Dennis Lee and Oscar Peterson. Dennis Lee said that "The Cultural Legacy Program provides a living legacy of those who came before us and achieved great things. It will enrich the city for generations to come. Oscar Peterson Place is an homage to one of Toronto's foremost citizens."**

A special thank you to [Cadillac Fairview](#) owners of the [Toronto-Dominion Centre](#) for embracing the concept of the Cultural Legacy Program and allowing the courtyard to be renamed Oscar Peterson Place.

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